

# C.R. SOBER TIMES PRESENTS AA GRAPEVINE WRITER'S WORKSHOP SPECIAL EDITION

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## AA Grapevine Writer's Workshop

### ZOOM WORKSHOP

Date: Saturday, October 1, 2022

Time: 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM Central Time  
(11:30 AM to 1:30 PM Eastern Time)

ZOOM ID LINK: **807716078**

(No password required)

Zoom Room Hosted by: District 8's EBUZ



Presented By:

Anne D. - Ames  
District 3 Grapevine Rep

Amy S. - Cedar Rapids  
District 8 Grapevine Rep

Jean R. - Cedar Rapids  
Dist. 8 EBUZ G.V. Rep

### Schedule of Events

Jon W. - Grapevine's Senior Editor  
10 Minute Speaker

GV Writer's Guideline Presentation

Grapevine Author Participant's Share

Grapevine Editorial Calendar

Question & Answer Period

*Special Thanks  
to all those who participated in the  
AA Grapevine  
Writer's Workshop*

*This Special Edition Newsletter  
is dedicated to you.*

Introducing our first Author Participant, Phil S. from

Ames, IA, AA District 3

Phil's story was published in the March 1992 AA Grapevine Magazine

Here's the link to the AA Grapevine story online

[Click Here](#)

May I have a link to the AA Grapevine Guideline Keynote Presentation?



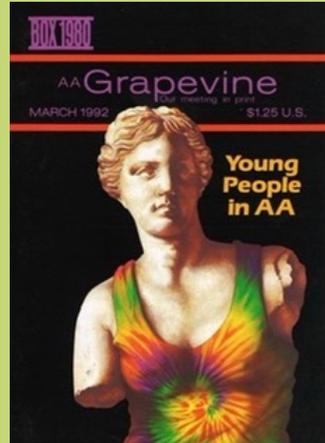
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Do you have questions about the AA Grapevine Writers Workshop?



Contact

[newsletter@aa-cedarrapids.org](mailto:newsletter@aa-cedarrapids.org)



### The Moment of Truth - Phil S.'s Story

"AA is not for people who need it, it's for people who want it." This phrase has been on my mind a lot lately. I'm a twenty-three-year-old alcoholic who, through the grace of God, sponsorship, and the AA program, has been sober since August 2, 1986.

At first, I wasn't too willing to accept AA. I hit one meeting a week, didn't have a sponsor, didn't read the Big Book, didn't work any of the Steps, and went out with my drinking buddies on weekends. Looking back, the only thing I did right during that period was to not drink and keep coming back. As a result of this lack of willingness to work the AA program, I didn't grow much at all during my first year of sobriety. I believe that it's impossible for me to stand still in the program--either I'm moving ahead or I'm sliding back. During those first twelve months, I definitely slid back more than I moved ahead.

In August of 1987, I moved here to Ames to go to college. Shortly after moving, the time came when I had to make a decision--take a drink or start working the program. Thank God, I chose the latter. I started going to a meeting every day, and soon got a sponsor and began working through the Steps. Amazingly, my life started getting better.

Today, as long as I do the things in front of me to do and accept the results as being God's will for me, I feel good. Of course, this isn't always the way it is. Pain is often my biggest motivator today. When I choose not to carry the principles into all of my affairs, I feel pain. After a while, this pain beats me into a state of reasonableness and I realize, once again, that *I* can't do it, but *we* can.

One of the easiest ways for me to start feeling pain today is to ignore my sponsor's suggestions. Writing this article is an example: he suggested I do it about a month ago, but I decided to wait for a while. When I found myself feeling some pain, I decided I'd better start writing. I look forward to the day when the periods of pain are almost nonexistent--I say "almost" because I strive for progress, not perfection. It's important for me to remember that the pain I feel isn't due to change--it's due to my resistance to change.

**BY: PHIL S. AMES, IOWA**

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**Introducing our second Author Participant, Bill H. From VINTON, IA, AA District 8**

**Bill's story was published in the August 2001 AA Grapevine Magazine**

**Here's the link to the AA Grapevine story online**

**[Click Here](#)**



**Spiritual Coffee Making - Bill H's Story**

Recovering alcoholics and coffee seem to go hand-in-hand—or hand in mug. (If there isn't any coffee when we want it, life can seem very unmanageable!) The spiritual progress of my coffee experience shows how the Steps have helped me improve my relationship with my wife.

Early in my sobriety, I worked nights at the same job that I'd had for a few years. Often my wife would get up before me and start her day. Sometimes, she'd be going off to work, sometimes she'd be getting the kids off to school, and other times she would be just doing things around the house. Some mornings, she'd make coffee, and other mornings she'd be content without it.

I would get up after she'd been up for a while and ask if the coffee had been made. Usually the answer was no. This would be cause for much discussion! I just couldn't understand why she wouldn't make the coffee and, if she didn't want it, just leave it for me when I got up. I didn't see how it would take that much effort to make a pot. After several of these discussions, I resolved that there was nothing that I could say that would make any difference anyway, so I wouldn't try to convince her that she should make coffee. I could see clearly that my cries were falling on deaf ears. So I'd get up and grudgingly make the coffee, and we'd sit down and have a cup or two.

Although I stopped mentioning this to my wife, I would often revisit the thought—i.e., the resentment. I knew I was powerless over the coffee being made before I got up, and I began to see the unmanageability of this issue in my life (Step One).

I knew I needed God's help and that he could do for me what I couldn't or wouldn't do for myself (Step Two). I also knew that I needed to take this to God and let him relieve me of my desire for things to be my way. When I prayed the Third Step Prayer, I disciplined myself to really listen to the words "relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do thy will. Take away my difficulties, that I may better do thy will." When I heard the words of this prayer, I knew that my difficulty wasn't having coffee ready for me when I got up in the morning. My difficulty was of my own making. This is evident when I am trying to get other people to do things the way I think is best—the way that would best suit my desires.

Next I had to see the selfishness in trying to arrange the show my way (Step Four). I saw this and admitted it to God and my fellows (Step Five). I was convinced that in order for God to remove my defects of character, I first needed to stop practicing my defects of character and doing what wasn't working (Step Six). Then I could humbly ask him for some guidance and direction to see how he could remove these shortcomings, and ask for what would work in this situation (Step Seven).

*Continued on page 4*



**2022 Carry The Message Project**

Grapevine and La Viña are Great Twelfth Step Tools!

Get your group, district, area or AA friends to join in. Carry the Message, it's easy!

To learn more visit [aagrapevine.org/carry-the-message](http://aagrapevine.org/carry-the-message)



**AAGRAPEVINE HAS A PODCAST ???**

A new podcast episode is available in English every Monday at 8:00 AM CT

To hear the podcasts click the below link: [aagrapevine.org/podcast](http://aagrapevine.org/podcast)

Continuing our story from

Our second Author  
Participant, Bill H.

Vinton, IA, AA District 8

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the August 2001  
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Here's the link to the AA  
Grapevine story online

[Click Here](#)

What is the AA Grapevine  
magazine looking for and  
when do they need it by?



Check out the AA Grapevine  
Editorial Calendar

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### Spiritual Coffee Making - Bill H's Story

The Seventh Step Prayer states: "I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows."

After a few years of sobriety, an opportunity came along for me to relocate to Omaha and work the day shift. As a day-shift person, I had a new routine that I followed every morning. I got up at 5:30 A.M. and made a pot of coffee. Then I showered, brushed my teeth, and got dressed while the coffee was perking. I poured two cups of coffee, one for my wife and one for myself, and while the coffee was cooling (my wife likes her coffee cooled down a little), I said my prayers and did my meditations (Step Eleven). Then my wife and I would have our coffee and conversation before I left for work (Steps Eight and Nine).

I've since moved back to rural Iowa and changed jobs. I still work the day shift and get up before my wife. I still have the coffee made and two cups poured each morning (Step Ten). I still allow time for my prayers and meditations while the coffee cools down. We still have our coffee and conversation each morning. This is as spiritual as life gets for me when I live as though I have had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, and I practice these principles in all of my affairs (Step Twelve).

Last Sunday morning on the way to church with our four children, I mentioned this coffee experience to my wife. My insistence that the coffee be ready for me when I got up was several years ago now, and my wife said she barely remembered these episodes--or discussions as I like to call them. She was touched that I see having coffee with her as a spiritual experience.

I also shared this experience for the first time with my home group last Sunday night. It was a very moving experience that made my eyes leak. (I still have an ego and don't like to say that sharing this experience brought tears to my eyes.)

By the way, this reinforces the importance of a home group where each member can feel at ease sharing experience, strength, and hope. I need my home group to be a place where I can learn to practice the principles embodied in the Twelve Steps with other alcoholics. This sets in motion my willingness to practice these principles in all my affairs, including my home life.

**BY: Bill H. Vinton, IOWA**

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**AA GRAPEVINE IS ON YOUTUBE - CLICK ON THE ABOVE PICTURE!**

**Introducing our third Author Participant, Scott N. From**

**Ames, IA, AA District 3**

**Scott's story was published in the November 2008 AA Grapevine Magazine**

**Here's the link to the AA Grapevine story online**

**[Click Here](#)**

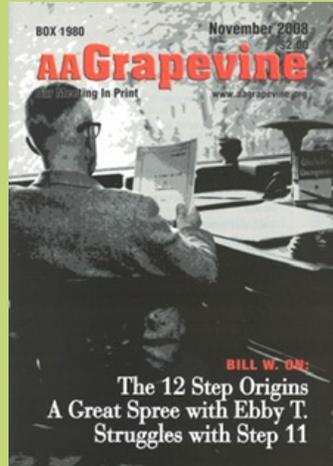
**I'm ready to write a story for the AA Grapevine Magazine. What is the link to submit a story?**



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**Check out the AA Grapevine Editorial Calendar**

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### **Simple Not Always Easy - Scott N.'s Story**

What does making coffee have to do with sobriety?

Even very early in my sobriety, I had a begrudging recognition that there was wisdom in the simple phrases I saw posted on the walls of meetings. I had some contempt for these cutesy expressions and the people who said them. I also had serious doubts that these simple concepts could help me out of the hopeless shambles my life had become.

I was different. My troubles were big. And I didn't see where taking things one day at a time, or keeping things simple, was going to improve my lot in life, even if meeting makers really did make it.

Luckily, when I finally showed up at the doors of AA, I did not have any more answers. I was just utterly defeated. A big part of that was that the drink was no longer the ambrosia that quieted my thoughts and made intolerable conditions okay. In fact, drinking was having quite the opposite effect. Gone was the relief from myself that I was always seeking. My thoughts raced. Drinking was driving me crazy, yet it was the only solution I had. I think it is safe to say that I had reached the jumping-off point.

I was indeed very lucky. I was ready to listen. I was willing to accept the help these strangely happy people were offering. Yes, some of the things I heard seemed silly, and didn't seem to have anything to do with staying sober, yet I did them. I was too tired to fight, and I didn't have any better schemes of my own.

I got a sponsor, chose a home group, made coffee, greeted, cleaned up after the meeting, prayed in the morning, prayed at night, read the Big Book, worked the Steps with my sponsor, wore a tie to my home group, called my sponsor daily, and went to meetings, meetings, and more meetings.

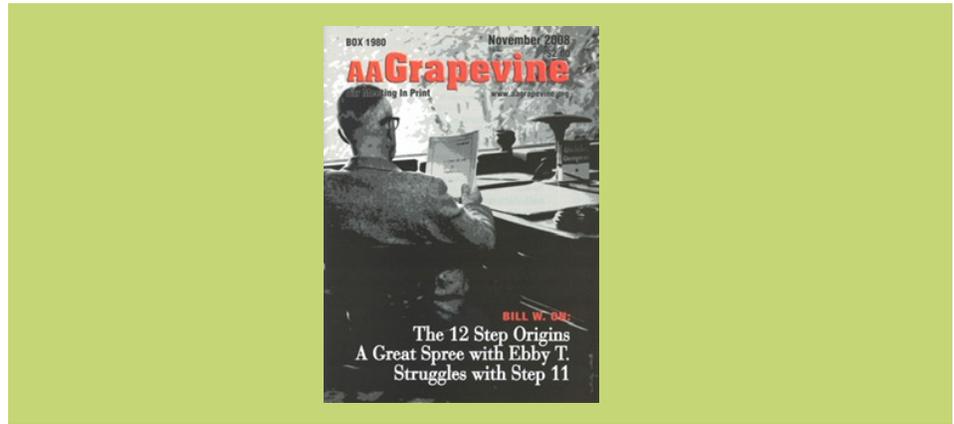
*Continued on page 6*

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### Simple Not Always Easy - Scott N.'s Story

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What does making coffee or shaking people's hands have to do with sobriety? For me, the why of it doesn't matter. I believe that the essence of the program, and the reason my life improved, lies with what I was doing, not what I was thinking or feeling. Finally it dawned on me that all the phrases and suggestions I had heard centered on actions that I could take. I can't recall ever hearing anything I wasn't capable of doing. Of course, I had to be willing to actually do them. That was the hard part. "Simple" doesn't mean "easy." I can shake a person's hand, but I don't like it. At large meetings, the last thing I want to do is share from the podium. Yet, I do it anyway. These actions do not depend on what I think or feel; they only depend on my doing them.

The times that I struggle are the times when I forget to keep things simple. The spiritual tools that were so freely set at my feet are useless if I ignore them. When I stop doing things my way and start doing things the way they are described in our text and by my sponsor, I again get some relief from myself. The world looks nicer. My life gets better

Today, I try to remember to keep things simple. I make many mistakes that remind me to be humble. I am far from perfect, but I'm not required to be. Life still happens--some good stuff, some bad stuff, and lots of in-between.

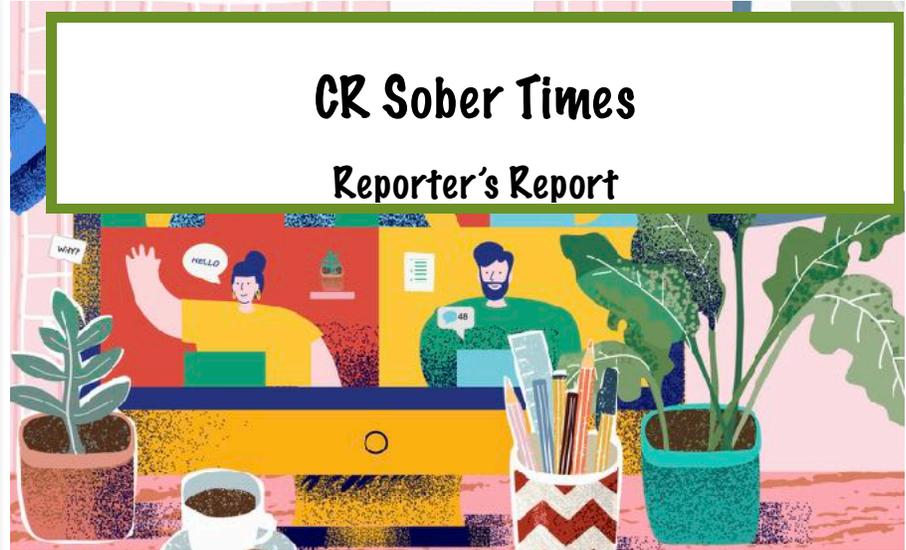
When I do what is in front of me to do, I don't need to worry about what happens when I have done my part; I am not the one in charge. I can face fear with the faith in a Higher Power that never left me. I can finally bring more to life than I take away.

It is as simple as that.

*Scott N., Ames, Iowa*

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**C.R. SOBER TIMES  
REPORTER'S REPORT  
ON THE WORKSHOP  
REPORTED BY:  
AL R.**



**Senior Editor Demystifies Writing for the Grapevine**

Jon W., Senior Editor of the the Grapevine, spoke at the AA Grapevine Writer's Workshop Saturday, Oct 1, 2022. His mission was to demystify writing for the Grapevine. In the process he provided great information and offered lots of tips.

His message was that you don't need to be a professional writer to get a story published in the Grapevine. If you have a story submit it. A person's writing skills are not that important. If the story is a little rough around the edges the Grapevine staff will edit it and make it look good.

He said stories should revolve around a drinking problem and an AA solution. And the more detail the better. If you were in a car driving to an AA meeting and there was a dog in the back seat barking include it.

Jon gave several examples of the types of stories the Grapevine likes to publish. Basically anything AA ranging from Steps and Traditions, dating in sobriety, sponsorship, service work, home groups, emotional sobriety, spiritual awaking, staying sober while traveling, fun in sobriety, how do you navigate parties, etc. Stories can be short or long, from 350 to 1800 words.

He also mentioned the Grapevine Editorial Calendar that lists the theme of each month with ideas about what to write about and the due date. But again, reiterated there is so much to write about such as letters to the editor, submitting jokes or cartoons (which they really need). He said if you have a beef with some aspect of AA send it in.

Jon said you will be contacted if your story is selected to be published but the staff just isn't large enough to send rejection letters for every story that is submitted and not published. But he added that if your story isn't immediately published it doesn't mean it won't be published at a later date. Stories are catalogued and may appear a year or more after they are submitted when the timing and editorial content of the Grapevine are more appropriate.

After the workshop Jon expressed it was great to see so many members enthusiastic about Grapevine and it made his day.

Al R.



**Check out the AA Grapevine  
Editorial Calendar**

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**I'm ready to write a story for  
the AAGrapevine Magazine.  
What is the link  
to submit a story?**



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**Introducing our fourth  
Author Participant,**

**Mike M.**

**From Shellsburg, IA**

**Mike's story was published  
in the July 1997 AA  
Grapevine Magazine**

**Mike's story is about  
the beginning of the  
Crossroads Meeting**

**Here's the link to the AA  
Grapevine story online**

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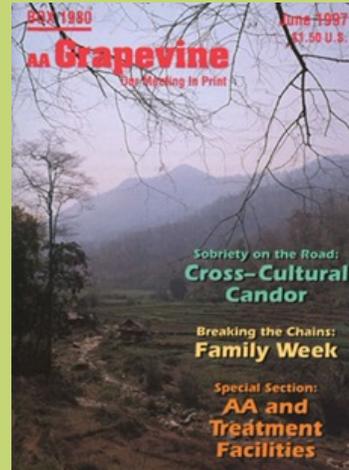
**What is the link  
to submit a story?**



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**Rural Recovery - Mike M.'s Story**

In the winter of 1992, in an AA meeting in another city where I attend the majority of my meetings, a man walked up to me and said, "Do I know you from somewhere?" I was newly sober and my first thought was that I'd hurt this man in some way. Maybe I owed him money! But it turned out we both lived in the same small farming community in rural Iowa. In fact, he lived next door to my older brother. After that, Bill and I started attending a lot of meetings together. We traveled twenty to thirty miles every night to attend AA meetings, which was great because it gave me plenty of time to talk to him.

One of the things we talked about was the possibility of starting an AA meeting in our small hometown. We wanted to start a meeting because of our absolute belief that alcoholism isn't just an urban disease. It is very much alive in rural America, and we wanted the hand of AA to be there for rural people. We decided to commit to the idea and began looking for a building to house the meeting. We were very limited in our choices but God led us to a rural parish that was almost literally out in the sticks, being next to a cornfield.

We met with the church board, purchased a coffeepot, got the basic AA literature, and in April 1993 had our first meeting. There were six people there that night, and over the years we've seen anywhere from four to fifty people around the tables. Many locals have attended. Some have stuck around, others haven't. We pray for those who do and those who don't.

I grew up on a farm only half a mile to the north of our little meeting place, and I often remember how it used to be, drinking every day, cruising the gravel roads, partying out in the pastures and timbers. I remember where the "fun" of those early days led me.

I always feel a deep sense of gratitude and peace when I arrive to open the meeting, put the key in the door, turn on the lights, and start setting up. Today we have a solid core of home group members who are committed to sponsorship. We've learned to ask ourselves, in our business meetings and on an individual basis, "Are we doing everything we can for the new person walking through the door?" Our very lives depend on the action we take as a response.

Mike M., Shellsburg, Iowa / Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc. July, 1997 -Reprinted with permission.

**C.R. SOBER TIMES  
REPORTER'S REPORT  
ON THE FOUR  
AUTHOR PARTICIPANTS  
REPORTED BY:  
AMIE B.**

**I want to submit a story  
What is the AA Grapevine  
magazine looking for and  
when do they need it by?**



**Check out the AA Grapevine  
Editorial Calendar**

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On a beautiful Saturday 30 AA's logged on to zoom to hear how to write a Grapevine article. Lucky enough to have the editor in attendance to fill in lots of blanks on the how to's. In addition 4 previously published authors were in attendance to share their experience, explaining the whys and the how's and by making the process much less daunting I suspect the Grapevine will be seeing and influx of story submissions from Ames, Cedar Rapids, and the surrounding areas.

What follows is wisdom from the published authors in attendance and their personal stories that brought them to writing their stories. Phil S. from Ames had his story, "The Basics" published in 1992.

Phil spoke about the time period in which he wrote his story, a young family with one small child and twins on the way, he had seen God in the eyes of those working the program and decided he too wanted this experience and relationship with God. He stresses that "writing it (the article) was the experience". He went on to stress that importance of home groups and sponsorship; doing the basics of AA.

Next up, Bill H. from Vinton. His story "Spiritual Coffee Making" was published in 2001. He was prompted by a fellow to write, they were riding back and forth to meetings and during this important "windshield time" they would discuss life and recovery. He says he approached the article through the 12 steps, the parents of young children he spoke about going to church and being with his children changed him, "I felt God a little more strongly" he said. He stresses that the important piece is reaching the still suffering alcoholic.

Scott N. from Ames spoke about his article "Simple But Not Always Easy" published in 2008. He found out his article had been published from a coworker and a fellow friend of Bill W., they had read it at their Grapevine meeting. Scott had written the story 3 years earlier as an assignment from his sponsor, he and other sponsees would spend an hour per month writing for the Grapevine, the common thread, he said, was "writing from the heart". He was blown away and found it "fun, and humbling, to be published".

The final presenting author, Mike M., from Shellsburg, IA had his story "Rural Recovery" published in 1997. His story told of a group of guys in a farming community getting together to start a meeting together. He stressed the importance of the home group and the relationship built in the fellowship. He went on to say "you never know whose heart will be touched by the people in AA" Grapevine articles are found in many places. He told of his mom framing his article and hanging it lovingly, centered in a wreath. Proof of the importance of AA to her, and the power of transformation she saw evidenced in her son.

Each author expressed the desire to take action for their recovery and to reach those still suffering. Thank you Phil S., Bill H., Scott N., and Mike M. for sharing your insights and inspiring those in attendance and many more through your articles.

Amy B.